

Farm Safety Week 2017

Day 1: Pub Landlord calls time on risk taking in farming

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The fifth annual **Farm Safety Week 2017** kicked off last night with good coverage on **BBC1's Countryfile** when comedian Al Murray (well-known as 'The Pub Landlord') called time on risk taking in farming.

(#Farm Safety Week is supported in UK and Ireland by the Farm Safety Foundation, the 5 national Farm Safety Partnerships, HSE, HSENI and HAS in Ireland together with an increased number of organisations and businesses.)

Al Murray revealed for the first time in public his role in saving a young farmworker's life when he was just 12. He recounted (in rather more sober tones than his alter ego, The Pub Landlord) that while holidaying at his cousin's farm in Walsham-le-Willows, near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, during harvest time, he heard cries for help as he was cycling back from the farmhouse to the field where he was playing. He went to investigate and found the 18-year-old farm manager's son (Chris Brown) with his right arm trapped in the pickup of a baler, in pain and losing a lot of blood.

This must have been quite traumatic for the 12-year-old Al, but in a scene reminiscent of one of his alter ego's tall tales, he tried to get Chris out of the machine by his boots. Realising this tactic wouldn't work, Al asked what he could do to help, the fortunately still-conscious teenager was able to tell Al how to switch the tractor and machine off. This wasn't as easy as it sounds though, as Al explained: "The tractor was Dutch so the stop control (or the 'whacking great knob' as Chris had described it to him) was located on the opposite side to where it should be."

Al managed to stop the machine and then went off to raise the alarm, bringing Chris' father who dismantled the machine to dislodge his son's arm and tourniquet the injury, before the ambulance arrived to take him hospital. Thankfully this 'Al Murray tale' has a happy ending as the young Chris survived and did not lose his arm – although the camera showed the awful damage caused to his arm by the rollers, as a warning to others in the programme. It must have been very difficult for both to recall this accident and its aftermath. Chris spent 18 months returning to hospital for treatment.

Chris explained that he got off the tractor to clear a blockage but slipped on the swathe because he was wearing wellingtons and his arm went into the machine.



This incident highlights the constant dangers of working with machinery and the importance of following the '[SAFE STOP](#)' procedure. As Chris himself admits: "I knew I was breaking every safety rule by not turning off the machine but, at 18 years of age, I was more concerned about getting my hair stuck in the baler than my arm!"

Fast forward nearly forty years and the same accidents are still happening and claiming the lives and limbs of too many farmers and farm workers. To mark the start of Farm Safety Week, HSE are releasing their latest Annual Fatal Injuries in Agriculture Report for Great Britain 2016-17, which contains more detailed analysis than HSE's All Industry Report. This highlighted that 30 people were killed in agriculture last year, compared with 29 the year before. While the rate of worker deaths shows some sign of improving, an annual average of 29 worker deaths, compounded by 2 or 3 members of the public killed each year, is a record the industry must improve.

"HSE's Help Great Britain Work Well strategy reaffirms our commitment to work with partners on initiatives like Farm Safety Week to inform their activities and to drive forward improvements in safety performance. We know that we need to engage with farmers of all ages to tackle this poor safety record and make farms safer places to work."

Despite over half of all fatal injuries occurring with older farmers over the age of 65, the fact remains that farm workers of any age run the risk of injury or death. It is also noted that a young child was killed for the first time in a couple of years.

In the Republic of Ireland, a further 21 people died on farms in during the calendar year 2016 – nearly half of their total across all industries. Fatal farm accidents have made up 50% of all workplace accidents so far this year, despite farming accounting for just 6% of the entire workforce. So far there have already been 15 more deaths categorised under the headings of either agriculture, forestry or fishing.

Another 6 people died on farms in Northern Ireland in 2016-17 (the same as the previous year). Despite fatalities in Northern Ireland's agriculture sector decreasing by 50% since the horrendous years of 2011 and 2012, (12 each year), the sector remains a key focus of the Northern Ireland Farm Safety Partnership.

Chairman of the NI Farm Safety Partnership, Keith Morrison, said: "Farming and food production play a crucial role in the life and economy of Northern Ireland. But every year we have to reluctantly report that agriculture has the poorest safety record of any occupation here."

We mustn't just focus in deaths either. The National Regulators recognise that although they have confidence in the number of fatal injuries recorded, there is a significant degree of under-reporting of incidents in agriculture, where the vast majority of workers are self-employed. Worryingly, statistics from a 2015 survey of Northern Ireland farmers suggests that there could be as many as 100 incidents per month on farms which require hospital treatment, whereas HSE states that the number of injuries in GB are around 15,000 - so we have a long way to go. At this level, it is sadly unsurprising that some of the more serious incidents can result in life changing injury or death.

Stephanie Berkeley from the **Farm Safety Foundation** (the charity behind '[Yellow Wellies](#)' and **Farm Safety Week**) also pointed out that: "Farming as an industry is absolutely vital to the UK economy – it is the bedrock of our food and drink industry. On a farm, as with any business, the number one resource is the people, so why is it that year on year we are seeing these hard working and dedicated people suffering life-changing and life-ending accidents?"



As Stephanie says; "Many farmers think 'farm safety last' rather than 'farm safety first' but most of these accidents are avoidable. Unlike other occupations, farmers don't normally retire at 65 and often work well into their 80s."

"Simple factors such as habit, haste, fatigue, and improperly maintained machinery contribute to this perfect storm but this Farm Safety Week, we hope that by hearing the stories of other farmers and extraordinary people like Al Murray who have had personal experience of farm accidents, we can get farmers of all ages to realise that this week, and every week, **farm safety is a lifestyle, not a slogan.**"

Devon YFC 'Growing Safer Farmers' initiative

This interesting separate farm safety initiative was also mentioned in the Countryfile programme. It was launched at the Devon County Show in May by the Devon Young Farmers Club, in response to one of their (20-year-old) members being killed when she was caught on a PTO shaft in March. More information on this initiative will be posted tomorrow (Tuesday), when the focus is on Machinery and Transport.

Footnote

Alan Plom, IOSH Rural Industries Group (RIG) Vice Chair, IOSH representative on the Board of the Farm Safety Partnership (FSP) in England and chair of the FSP's Transport & Machinery Group commented: "I am very pleased to say that IOSH played its part in arranging this 'coup' to launch **#FarmSafetyWeek**, as this came about because Chris (now a Trainer/Instructor) was encouraged to describe his accident to me at a meeting of UK Rural Skills Training Groups and instructor members about the Farm Safety Partnership and the work of IOSH and RIG.

I realised this was too good an opportunity to miss and I am pleased that Chris was able to talk to Al about the incident and mentioned the '**Yellow Wellies**' and **Farm Safety Week** campaigns, when he was invited to one of his gigs, and Al willingly agreed to help."

Alan added: "This shows how important it is for all our members to keep your ear to the ground and pass on any ideas for publicity or producing guidance, etc. I am sure Al and Chris talking about this incident, along with the other farm accident 'survivors' interviewed in the programme, will raise awareness much wider. Let us hope it gets through to more people and persuades them to think twice. Actually, thinking once might even be enough!"

More information

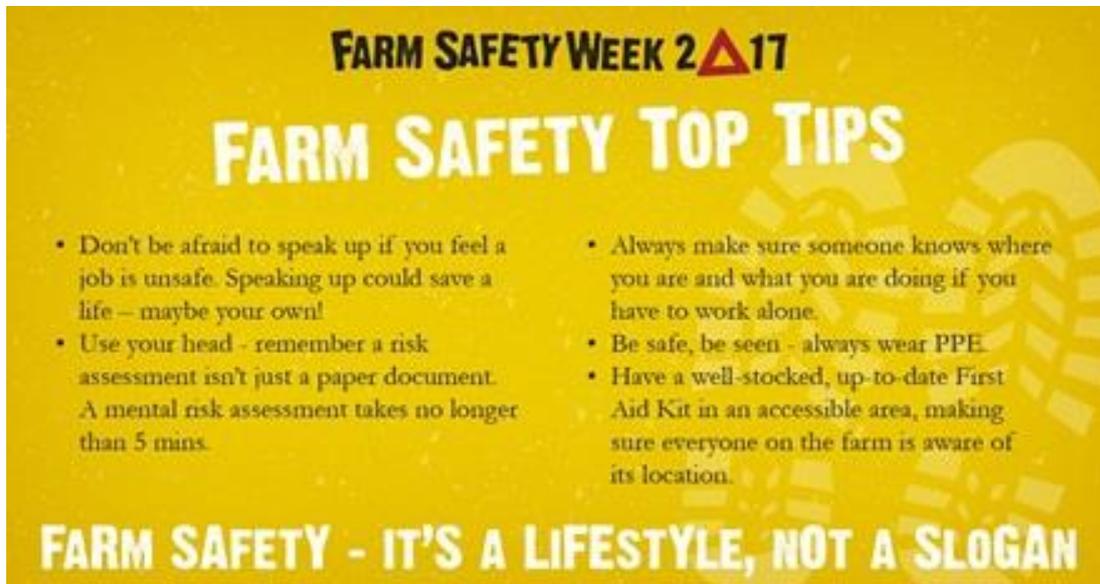
If you missed this episode of Countryfile, do try to watch it on BBC i-Player or via the [Countryfile webpage](#).

The organisers of **#FarmSafetyWeek** have searched the UK and Ireland to gather inspirational stories which support the theme 'farm safety is a lifestyle, not a slogan' and will be publishing case studies and 'Top Tips' on a different theme each day throughout the week, so 'watch this space'.

For more information on Farm Safety Week visit [Yellow Wellies](#). You can also follow @yellowwelliesUK on Twitter/Facebook, using the hashtag #FarmSafetyWeek.

You will see many Tweets, including from Al Murray, made during and after the programme. You can also read recent blogs and useful information on the [NFU and Farm Safety Partnership](#) webpages.

Mondays 'Top Tips'

A yellow poster for Farm Safety Week 2017. At the top, it says "FARM SAFETY WEEK 2017" with a red triangle containing the number 17. Below that, in large white letters, is "FARM SAFETY TOP TIPS". The poster lists six safety tips in two columns. At the bottom, it reads "FARM SAFETY - IT'S A LIFESTYLE, NOT A SLOGAN".

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FARM SAFETY TOP TIPS

- Don't be afraid to speak up if you feel a job is unsafe. Speaking up could save a life – maybe your own!
- Use your head - remember a risk assessment isn't just a paper document. A mental risk assessment takes no longer than 5 mins.
- Always make sure someone knows where you are and what you are doing if you have to work alone.
- Be safe, be seen - always wear PPE.
- Have a well-stocked, up-to-date First Aid Kit in an accessible area, making sure everyone on the farm is aware of its location.

FARM SAFETY - IT'S A LIFESTYLE, NOT A SLOGAN